



Federal Update for August 18 - 22, 2014



CRDP/CRSC Programs ► Navy Sec.'s Explanation on Policy

There are two concurrent receipt programs available to Navy and Marine Corps retirees who have VA-rated disabilities. They are the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) program and the Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC) program. Retirees who receive VA disability payments have their retired pay “offset” (reduced) by the amount of VA pay. These concurrent receipt programs “restore” some or all of that retired pay. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) calculates and pays monthly CRDP and CRSC compensation. It is highly recommended that you have a myPay account set up with DFAS to manage your retired pay. If you do not refer to the following on how to set up an account: <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/manage/mypay.html>. In order to be eligible for these programs, disabled retirees must be eligible for retired pay AND be in receipt of VA disability compensation. Medical retirees (TDRL & PDRL) with less than 20 years of service are eligible for CRSC only. Twenty year and Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) retirees (15-19 years of service) and Reservists (age 60) are eligible for both CRSC and CRDP, but can receive compensation from only one program. Applicants must apply to the service CRSC Board from which they retired (<http://www.public.navy.mil/asnmra/corb/CRSCB/DD%20Forms/dd2860.pdf>).

- CRDP is automatic and is paid to 20-year and TERA retirees who have VA rated service connected disabilities of 50 percent or higher. There is no application required, nor accepted. DFAS determines eligibility and pays monthly CRDP compensation. CRDP payments are taxed.
- CRSC is for military retirees with combat-related disabilities of 10% or greater. Combat-related determinations are made by the CRSC Board for the branch of service from which the member retired. A combat-related determination is made for each VA disability claimed. The retiree must apply using the CRSC application form (DD-2860 July 2011). The “burden of

proof” is on the claimant and the claim should include the member’s DD-214, VA Rating Decisions, applicable Service Medical Records (SMRs), the PEB Findings Letter (for medical retirees) and pertinent service personnel records. Reconsiderations are accepted if new documentary evidence as to the cause of the disability is provided or for any new disabilities rated by the VA. Appeal authority for CRSC is the Board for Correction of Naval Records (BCNR).

CRSC compensation for medical retirees is calculated by DFAS using a complicated formula that takes into account the PEB, VA and CRSC percentages. CRSC pay can never exceed what would have been the years of service (YOS) retired pay amount, but can be much less and sometimes zero. CRSC pay is not taxed. At www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/woundedwarrior/disabledretireest.htm medical retirees can determine the approximate CRSC pay they will receive. Applicants may apply for CRSC under one of four categories: 1) Direct result of Armed Conflict (AC), 2) while engaged in Hazardous Service (HS), 3) in the performance of duty under conditions Simulating War (SW), and 4) disabilities resulting from the operation of an Instrumentality of War (IN).

In order for a CRSC claim to be approved, there must be a direct causal relationship between the armed conflict or training exercise that simulates war and the resulting disability. The CRSC board makes combat-related determinations only on VA rated service connected disabilities. Slips, trips, and falls, lifting heavy objects, as well as physical training, are not combat-related disabilities. The fact that a veteran incurred a disability during a period of war or simulated war; or in an area of armed or simulated conflict, or while participating in combat or simulated combat operations; is not sufficient to support a combat-related determination. Only the CRSC Board for each branch of service is authorized to make combat-related determinations. Combat Zone (CZ) notations in VA and PEB documents are not combat related determinations.

A reconsideration request to the CRSC Board is required if your VA rating percentage increases due to the VA approval of a new or unclaimed disability. For further explanation of reconsideration requests go to www.public.navy.mil/asnmra/corb/CRSCB/Pages/CRSCB%20main%20page.aspx. This site should be reviewed prior to applying or contacting the Board at <http://www.public.navy.mil/asnmra/corb/CRSCB>. The primary means of

communication with the DoN CRSC Board is by email at: CRSC@navy.mil. If you want a call, send an email with your phone number. [Source: Navy Personnel Command | Shift Colors | Spring 2014 ++]

Retired Activity Office Update ► Privacy Rules

To help reduce the risk of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) leaks, Navy Retired Activity Offices (RAO) and Navy-sponsored independent coordination offices are not authorized to maintain files containing PII of any kind on retirees, surviving spouses and their dependents. The RAO volunteer staff may only maintain a log of the client's name, phone number and the service provided. All sensitive PII documents used in the transaction will be returned to the client prior to them leaving the office. It is up to the client to maintain their files and bring them with them each time they visit an RAO office, including follow-up appointments. As defined in DoD 5400.11-R, Department of Defense Privacy Program, May 14, 2007, PII is information about an individual that identifies, links, relates, or is unique to, or describes him or her, such as a social security number, age, military rank, civilian grade, marital status, race, salary, home phone numbers, and other demographic, biometric, personnel, medical, and financial information. Due to the sensitive information that may be required to assist clients during RAO transactions, the loss or compromise of PII can result in substantial harm including identity theft or other fraudulent use of the information. For more information contact the Navy Retired Activities Office at (901) 874-6723 or (901) 874-6949. [Source: Shift Colors | Navy Retired Activities Office | Aug 12, 2014 ++]

Sequestration Update ► Caps Cast Shadow Over DoD

It's a tough time to be in charge of the Defense Department's day-to-day operations. But that's the job that Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work stepped into in May after Congress confirmed him for the number two position. Work, a retired Marine colonel who is well known in Washington circles as a national security expert, said he understands why many service members are anxious about the future. As military spending has begun to fall, training has slowed, falling force levels are making promotions harder and the entire compensation system is under review. Work sat down with Military Times in his

Pentagon E-ring office to talk about the unique challenges facing today's military and how he's hoping to tackle them in the remaining 2 1/2 years of the Obama administration. "There's unease about readiness, unease about where will the personnel levels finally come down to, unease about the compensation packages," Work said. "There is unease throughout the force on a wide variety of issues because of the chaotic nature of this drawdown."

He said the darkest cloud hanging over DoD remains the spending caps known as sequestration. A deal on Capitol Hill last year offered a two-year fix, but with only about 13 months until that deal expires in fiscal 2016, the threat of sequestration remains. At that point, the doomsday scenarios discussed last year— an urgent shift to a far smaller Army and Marine Corps, fewer aircraft carriers and fighter jets —may be back on the table. "The members of the services are asking, 'Can I continue to serve? Will I still have a job in the armed services?' That's the first level of uncertainty ... and we're unable to tell them exactly how far down we'll go because we hope that sequestration will not be triggered." If the budget squeeze does tighten again in 2016, "that is going to be even more of a problem," he said.

- Compensation - Work said it's unclear whether the Pentagon will propose further cuts to military compensation. The top brass wants to curb personnel cost growth because it could limit new investment in training, weapons systems and cutting-edge technology. Work said Pentagon leaders had hoped to resolve concerns about pay and benefits in March with a slate of changes that would save money by reducing long-term compensation costs. The proposals included:
 - a) Capping troops' annual pay raises at 1 percent.
 - b) Forcing troops to pay 5 percent of their average housing costs with out-of-pocket cash.
 - c) Eliminating the commissary subsidy at most U.S. installations, which would raise store prices.
 - d) Revising Tricare co-pay rules to require some families to pay more for their health care.

"What we were hoping to do," Work said, "is to convince Congress that, 'Look, if you help us with this package, we're not going to come back for more.' " But if lawmakers pick and choose off the Pentagon's list, as they seem inclined to do,

“we may have to go back in and take another swing,” Work said. “ And we know that that creates a little bit of uncertainty.”

- Readiness - In March of last year, when sequestration took effect, “readiness went to hell,” Work said bluntly. The two-year fix that Congress approved last year has allowed the services to resume training and maintenance, for the most part. Even so, Work said, “We are in a readiness trough, without question. We’re not as deep as we would have been....Congress’ help in that regard really prevented a crisis.” For now, there is enough money to fully fund units preparing for deployment and those designated as first responders, like the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division. “Where we have a problem is in our surge forces,” Work said. “We are taking significant risk.” Yet the deputy secretary avoids the term “tiered readiness,” which for many senior officers negatively evokes the post-Vietnam era and concerns of a “hollow force.” “Instead of tiered readiness, I’d say ‘time-phased’ readiness, where we don’t have enough money to make sure everyone is C-1 or C-2 at any given time,” he said, referring to the internal readiness scale of “capability levels,” which ranges from C-1 for units fully ready for a wartime mission, to C-5 for units that are not trained or equipped properly for a deployment.
- New cost-cutting efficiencies - In an effort to find more money for operations, Work said the Pentagon is gearing up a new effort to cut overhead and administrative costs. Specifically, that will target the “Fourth Estate” — everything other than the military services and combatant commands. That includes entities like the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the 16 defense agencies like the Tricare Management Agency and the Defense Logistics Agency. Those account for about 20 percent of the overall defense budget. While the Pentagon has mounted efficiency reviews in the past, this one will be the first to directly involve private-sector experts from the Defense Business Board and the not-for-profit Business Executives for National Security, he said.
- Tension in Europe - Work said that if tensions between Russia and the West continue to mount, the Pentagon this fall may launch a far-reaching review of the U.S. force levels and military footprint in Europe. Current efforts to

ramp up readiness in Europe — which include deployments of some small U.S. units closer to the Russian border — are a temporary solution to what may be a long-term crisis. A “program review” could come this fall as DoD prepares its annual budget request for submission early next year. Military leaders may consider fundamental questions about U.S. troop levels in Europe and how they should be positioned across the continent. EUCOM has about 68,000 U.S. troops, down from a Cold War-era peak of more than 350,000 in the 1980s. Most are in Germany and Italy, yet NATO’s newest partners in Eastern Europe, including Poland and the three Baltic states, feel more threatened by Russia and are eager to host more U.S. forces. “As this crisis continues and de-pending on how it plays out, we would take a look in the [fiscal 2016 budget] and say ... ‘Do we have to make any other decisions?’ And these decisions can be, ‘Do we have to have more rotational forces in Europe than we have otherwise figured we were going to have? Should we station different types of forces in Europe?’ All those things would be on the table,” Work said. [Source: NavyTimes | Andrew Tilghman | Aug 18, 2014 ++]

POW/MIA Update ► Kuentai-USA Concerns on Saipan MIA

Racing against time, members of a Japanese organization are combing a New York military museum's World War II records for information they hope will lead to the graves of American servicemen still listed as missing in action on Saipan. The reason for the urgency: A developer plans to begin construction in the fall on a condominium near the beach where scores of Americans were killed on July 7, 1944, during Japan's largest mass suicide attack of the war. Kuentai-USA, a nonprofit group that searches Pacific islands for Japan's war dead, found the remains of at least two American fighting men near the construction site in 2011 and 2013, and believes as many as 16 others are buried nearby. "This is urgent," said Kuentai-USA founder Usan Kurata, a 58-year-old journalist who is visiting the New York State Military Museum this week with another group leader, both from Kyoto. He said the Japanese organization believes that returning Americans' remains to their families is the right thing to do.

The Pentagon agency in charge of searching foreign battlefields for America's dead says about 20 U.S. servicemen are unaccounted for on Saipan, part of the

Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. commonwealth 1,400 miles (2,250 kilometers) from Japan. Maj. Jamie Dobson, a spokeswoman for the Hawaii-based U.S. Joint POW-MIA Accounting Command, said that developers must follow Saipan's stringent historic preservation laws and that if a probable burial site is found to be in imminent danger, the U.S. will send in a recovery team. Kuentai said it has an agreement with the Russian developer of the condo project to excavate the property for remains, but the group is still awaiting final approval from local authorities. The researchers' visit to the U.S. comes 70 years after more than 3,000 Japanese troops launched the assault that killed or wounded more than 900 soldiers in the Army's 105th Regiment, part of the 27th Infantry Division, a former New York National Guard unit.

Many of the Americans killed in the "banzai" attack were from New York state. The museum holds many of the 27th Division's records, including enlistment cards, rosters, regimental yearbooks, photographs and other documents. Using battlefield photos published in Life magazine in August 1944 and military maps at the National Archives in Washington, Kuentai located a mass grave containing the skeletal remains of nearly 800 Japanese troops. The bones were cremated and the ashes brought back to Japan for burial. During its excavations, the group also discovered the remains of five probable American soldiers. JPAC said two have been identified so far as MIAs from the 105th Regiment, and they were returned for burial in their home states of Kentucky and Pennsylvania. JPAC and the Defense Department's other casualty accounting agency, the Defense POW-MIA Office, are the subject of a Pentagon inspector general's investigation of potential fraud and waste. [Source: The Associated Press | Chris Carola | July 30, 2014 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries

"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,539) Korean War (7,822) Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,642), 1991 Gulf War (0), and OEF/OIF (6). Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of

all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for. For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call or call (703) 699-1169. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam – None

Korea

The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Cpl. Alva C. Groves, 18, of Four States, W. VA, will be buried Aug, 7 in Prunytown, W. VA. In November 1950, Groves was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, when his unit was attacked by a vast number of Chinese forces while occupying a defensive position northeast of the village of Kujang, North Korea. On Nov. 25, Groves unit consolidated its defensive lines and continued its withdrawal east. Groves was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950. On Aug. 8, 1953, Chinese forces reported that Groves was captured during the battle and died on April 14, 1951, from tubercular peritonitis in a prisoner of war camp in Pyokdong, North Korea. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea turned over to the U.S. 208 boxes of human remains believed to contain 350 - 400 U.S. servicemen who fought during the war. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the remains were recovered from a North Korean prisoner-of-war camp in Pyrodong, where Groves was believed to have died. To identify Groves' remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, including DNA comparisons.

World War II

- The remains of two missing airmen have been accounted for 70 years after they disappeared when their plane went down over Papua New Guinea during World War II, U.S. military officials said. 1st Lts. William Bernier and Bryant Poulsen were identified through DNA and other evidence collected

from the crash site in a forest on the Pacific island nation, said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Melinda Morgan with the Defense Prisoner of War-Missing Personnel Office. Bernier was from Augusta and Poulsen from Salt Lake City, Utah. On April 10, 1944, their B-24-D Liberator nicknamed "Hot Garters" took off from an air base in eastern Papua New Guinea. It was one of 60 B-24s tasked with bombing anti-aircraft positions around Japanese airfields, according to PacificWrecks.com, a nonprofit group that documents details on military personnel missing in action from the Pacific Theater. Poulsen piloted the 28-ton bomber while Bernier was the bombardier, stationed in a glass cockpit in the aircraft's nose and responsible for sighting and releasing its bombs. Their plane went down after being hit by anti-aircraft fire over the city of Madang, Morgan said. Four of the 12-member crew exited the aircraft after it had been hit. Those men were captured by the Japanese and executed, Morgan said. The remaining crew, including Poulsen and Bernier, went down with the aircraft. Their remains were accounted for using mitochondrial DNA — which can be compared to DNA from living relatives — and "circumstantial evidence," according to Morgan. Further details were not provided. Several other crew members also have been recently accounted for, but their names and other specifics were not immediately released because relatives have not yet been notified, Morgan said. The entire crew was officially declared dead the day of the mission. S/Sgt Donald C. Crotteau, the gunner, was executed as a POW on April 24, 1944. The missing are memorialized on the tablets of the missing at Manila American Cemetery.

Bernier's niece, Sandi Jones, said she plans to bury his remains in Augusta in September. She said that after his disappearance, Bernier's mother refused to discuss the matter, hoping that he would one day return to the family's ranch. "He was a Montana boy, so that's where he should be," Jones said. Bernier, whose nickname was "Laddie," enlisted as a private in the U.S. Army Air Force on Dec. 10, 1941 — just three days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, according to his enlistment records on file with the National Archives. He was not married, worked before the war in the forestry industry and attended three years of college, the records show. Poulsen enlisted April 17, 1942. He was unmarried and had two years of college. His family declined an interview request through defense officials. The airmen will be buried with full military honors.

- The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 25 JUL that the remains of a Canadian Citizen U.S. serviceman, missing from World War II, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. On August 13, 1944 Army Pfc. Lawrence S. Gordon, 28, and elements of the Reconnaissance Company, 32nd Armored Regiment, 3rd Armored division were deployed to France. Gordon was the commander of an M8 armored car traveling near the village of Carrouges, France, when his vehicle was struck in the gas tank by German anti-tank fire, which caused the armored car to catch fire and burn. During the attack Gordon was reported as missing in action. His remains were not recovered after the attack. Military records later indicated that an M8 armored car, bearing Reconnaissance markings, was recoded to have burned due to enemy fire, and that the vehicle and crew members that had not survived the attack were recovered on Aug. 15, 1945. Two weeks after Gordon's disappearance his wallet was received by Effects Quartermaster Corps. On April 3, 1945, Gordon's status was changed to killed-in-action.

On July 22, 1947, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) was conducting field investigations on the loss of Gordon but failed to locate his remains. The investigators noted that prior to Aug. 18, 1944, two sets of unknown remains, clothed in German uniforms, but believed to be those of American service members, were delivered to a temporary U.S. cemetery in Gorrion France. Due to lack of necessary documentation for identification and the high number of casualties between 1 and 18 Aug. 1944, the AGRC concluded there was insufficient information to pursue further identification. On May 25, 1961, remains were transferred from the temporary cemetery to the custody of the German War Graves commission and interred at Mont-de-Huisnes, France. In Aug. 1951, the AGRC issued a final report determining that due to paucity of remains and lack of information, there was no association between the remains buried in the temporary cemetery and Gordon. Therefore, Gordon was determined to be non-recoverable by a military review board on Sept. 25, 1951.

An independent researcher, Jed Henry, provided historical research that led to the disinterment and the subsequent identification of Gordon. Scientists from Bode Technology and the University of Wisconsin's Biotechnology Center used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as mitochondrial DNA sequence data. Gordon was returned to the family in July and a special

escort was provided as he as returned to the U.S. The family has chosen to return Gordon to Canada via ground transportation and will be reimbursed for the transportation costs from Wisconsin to Canada. He will be buried in his hometown of Eastend, Sask., on Aug. 13 this year, which is the 70th anniversary of his death.

- The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 6 AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, lost during World War II, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors. U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Gerald Von Atkinson, 21, of Ramer, Ala., will be buried Aug. 16 in Chattahoochee, Fla. On April 10, 1945, Atkinson and eight other crew members aboard a B-17G, were assigned to the 303rd Bombardment Group (Heavy). Atkinson was assigned as a spot jammer aboard the aircraft that departed Molesworth, England on a bombing mission over Oranienburg, Germany. During the mission the aircraft crashed and Atkinson was reported missing. Atkinson's aircraft, along with 38 other aircraft from the 303rd Bombardment Group, were flying in a formation as part of a major allied bombing operation against targets in Germany. After successfully dropping their ordnance, Atkinson's aircraft was attacked by six to eight German ME-262 jets. The aircraft crashed into the Groß Glasow Lake near Groß Schonebeck, Germany. Of the crew of nine, only one crewmember survived.

In 1946 and 1947, German nationals recovered remains from Groß Glasow Lake believed to be the remains of American airmen and they were buried as unknowns in a local community cemetery. In August 1947, the remains were exhumed by the U.S. Army Graves Registration Command (AGRC) and reinterred as unknowns in Nueville en Condroz, Belgium. In December 1948, the remains were again exhumed for possible identification and it was determined the remains were members of Atkinson's crew; however, the AGRC could not conclusively establish individual identifications and the unidentified remains were reinterred as unknowns in the Brittany American Cemetery and Memorial in St. James, France in November 1951. In 2012, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) re-examined the AGRC's records and concluded that the possibility of identification of the unknown remains now exist. To identify Atkinson's remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification

Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and mitochondrial DNA, which matched Atkinson's cousin.

[Source: http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/ Aug 15, 2014 ++]

Rep. Walz Honored as Top Veterans' Advocate by Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)

Rochester, MN [8/18/14] – Representative Tim Walz was awarded the Col. Arthur T. Marix Congressional Leadership Award and received commendation from the Minnesota Chapter of MOAA endorsing the national award in Rochester today for his leadership and advocacy for veterans, their families, and active duty service personnel. MOAA is the nation's largest association of active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, and former military officers and their families and survivors. The association annually recognizes individuals or organizations that strongly support servicemembers and their families.

"I am honored and humbled to receive this award from such an upstanding organization," Representative Walz, the highest ranking enlisted soldier to ever serve in Congress, said. "As we move forward, I will continue to ensure our brave servicemembers and their families have the support and care they have earned and deserve."

Since first coming to Congress, Walz has made caring for our brave veterans a priority and has been a national leader on veterans issues. Most recently, Walz served on the bipartisan, bicameral conference committee that worked out a final agreement to reform the troubled Department of Veterans Affairs. Walz also recently introduced a comprehensive bill aimed at tackling the veteran suicide epidemic. Walz authored that bill with Republican House VA Committee Chairman Jeff Miller of Florida. Walz has been recognized by nearly 20 leading veterans' service organizations for his work advocating for veterans, including the Military Order of Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), AMVETS, and The Blinded Veterans Association, among others.

Sen. Franken, Rep. Walz to Talk Improving Mental Health Care and Suicide Prevention with Veterans, Veteran's Family, and Veteran Advocates

St. Paul, MN –U.S. Sen. Al Franken and U.S. Representative Tim Walz met with veterans, a veteran's family, and veteran advocates to talk about ways to improve mental health for veterans and stop the rash of suicides that now claims almost two dozen veterans every day.

The two lawmakers said an average of 22 veterans commit suicide each day. To help tackle this growing epidemic, Rep. Walz recently introduced bipartisan legislation in the House of Representatives that would take a comprehensive approach to reform and improve mental health care for our veterans and their families. The legislation was written in conjunction with and is supported by veteran service organizations such as the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). Sen. Franken, a leading voice on improving mental health care, said he supports the House effort and is currently looking at ways to move forward with Senate legislation.

BACKGROUND ON HOUGHTALING FAMILY:

Adam Houghtaling, son of Curt and Heidi (Voss) Houghtaling was born on Aug. 21, 1984. The Houghtaling family has a rich history of serving our country and, from a young age, it was clear Adam cared deeply about his country. Following in his father's footsteps, at age 17 Adam enlisted in the Army National Guard to serve alongside his father. In 2003, the father-son pair deployed to Iraq together with the B Battery 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery unit of the South Dakota National Guard. After returning from Iraq in 2005, having spent over a year protecting our freedom in the desert, Adam worked as a recruiter for the South Dakota Army National Guard until he was re-deployed to Kuwait in 2009. After returning from his second deployment in 2010, Adam moved to Minneapolis to be closer to his family, which includes his two sisters, Melissa Houghtaling and Jessica Griffin.

Unbeknownst to many, despite his bright smile, SSG Adam Houghtaling came back from Iraq with a broken soul. His positive demeanor masked his internal struggles; Adam had a metal plate put in his neck from injuries he received while deployed and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). While Adam loved

his family deeply, the emotional pain became too great a burden to bear. On August 19th 2012, Adam took his own life just two days before his 28th birthday. Adam's parents and sisters are now working to prevent another family from having to go through what they went through and have become suicide prevention and awareness advocates. They are meeting with Senator Franken and Representative Walz to talk about the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America's Veterans (Clay Hunt SAV) Act, which Rep. Walz introduced earlier this summer. The bipartisan bill was written in conjunction with the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and takes a comprehensive approach to reform and improve mental health care for veterans and their families.